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S E R M O N

PREACHED before the

K I N G.

On SUNDAY, *March 12,* 1752.

Drawn up for the USE of

THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES
GEORGE Prince of WALES,
and Prince EDWARD.

K. Hayter BY
THOMAS Lord Bishop of NORWICH,
PRECEPTOR.

L O N D O N:

Printed for JOHN and PAUL KNAPTON,
in Ludgate-Street. MDCCLII.

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On Sunday, March 22, 1733.

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GEORGE PRINCE OF WALES

and FRANCES EDWARD.

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1 Cor. VII. 31.

*They that use this world as not abusing it,
for the fashion of this world passeth
away.*

AS every Duty hath Motives and Con-
siderations peculiar to itself, it is ne-
cessary, at different Times, to state each Du-
ty singly; for by this Means it will be en-
forced with more Clearness and Advantage.
But, upon some Occasions, it is no less use-
ful, to take a larger View of Things, and
settle those general Principles of Life and
Conduct, which will enable us to judge
more readily of each Case, as it arises. For
thus in any Art or Science, if the funda-
mental Truths are well understood, and
made familiar to the Mind, the particular

Truths are easily deduced from them; and we shall with less Danger of erring, form just Conceptions, and draw right Conclusions in any single Difficulty that falls under our Examination.

BUT what Art or Science is there, in which it so nearly concerns us to be thoroughly conversant, as in that of living as we ought? What other Branch of Knowledge will instruct us to maintain a consistent Character, direct all our Actions uniformly to their proper End, and reduce them into a regular System? When therefore the whole of human Life is made the Subject of our Meditations, some interesting Reflections will of Course offer themselves, which lie out of the Limits of a more confined Subject; and which will afford us practical Rules of Behaviour, applicable to every Part and every Station of Life, and derived from the most affecting Topics of Persuasion.

THE Shortness and the Uncertainty of human Life; the Dignity and Infirmities of our Nature will of Course present themselves to a Mind engaged in this Train of Thinking. By considering one Part of our Constitution, we shall feel that we are accountable for our Behaviour; by looking into the other, that we are perpetually in Danger of behaving wrongly. For the Union of a rational Mind to a corruptible Body, must produce a Struggle between the Dictates of Reason, and the Impulses of Appetite and Passion; and this Struggle must last, till the Union, from whence it springs, is dissolved. For Appetite and Passion regard the immediate desired Gratification only; Reason looks forward, and weighs the Consequences of Things: And when the Eye of Reason can reach no farther, the Light of Revelation rises upon us, and opens the boundless Prospect of Eternity.

A CREATURE so circumstanced, must, as long as those Circumstances remain, be in a State of Trial. Thus the very Frame of our Nature shews us, what Religion declares with more Solemnity. But I am afraid we do not sufficiently attend to that awful alarming Truth, which the Idea of a State of Trial, in a religious Sense, conveys to us. For does it not imply that Creatures, formed for Immortality, and placed for a few Years in this changeable World, are, at their Entrance upon Being, and, as it were, in the Infant State of their Existence, charged with the Care of their final Happiness; and that their Behaviour here will secure or forfeit it for ever? If this be the Case, as it certainly is, if the most cogent Arguments have any Force, with what Care should we work out our Salvation! With what sollicitude should we endeavour *to use this World, as not abusing it*; i. e. to desire the good Things of this World with that Moderation,

Moderation, and apply them to those Purposes which *our own Hearts will not condemn*, and which *God, who is greater than our Hearts*, more intimately acquainted with our most secret Intentions than we ourselves are, may approve.

To demonstrate the Necessity of this Vigilance, I have chosen this Passage of the Apostle to enlarge upon. It will be needless to refer to the Context, for the Text itself contains a full instructive Sense, independent, of what goes before, or follows after it; and all Men, at all Times, are concerned to observe the Caution. For the *Fashion of this World passeth away*, i. e. all human Things are as transitory, and Men are as mortal now, as they were when *St Paul* wrote this Epistle to the *Corinthians*.

Now however various the Objects of our Pursuit are, those that constitute our Danger, fall under the three Heads of

sensual

sensual Pleasure, Riches, and temporal Power, which are all alike perishable, and equally unconnected with real Happiness.

Two general Observations will briefly explain the true Nature of each of these, enable us to form an exact Estimate of their Worth, and point out to us, at the same Time, wherein the right Use of them consists: And from thence we shall see and adore the Divine Wisdom and Goodness in those Provisions that are made by God, to protect us against the Temptations of a treacherous World.

First THEN it is to be observed, by all who have a Regard to their temporal or eternal Welfare, that those Things which we pursue as if they had an intrinsic unalterable Worth and Excellence in them, are, in their own Nature, indifferent; and become Blessings or Curses to us, as we make a right or a wrong Use of them.

As to *sensual Pleasure*, the most dangerous, because it is the most insinuating Enemy; if we view it in the Purpose of the all-wise Contriver of these *earthly Tabernacles*, which we carry about us, and consider it as enjoyed under the Directions and Restraints of Reason, every Sense appears to be a wonderful Inlet of different Satisfactions to sweeten the Journey of Life, whilst we sojourn here below, and to communicate Comforts to us in our Prison. If we view it in the Excesses of the *Sensualist*, we are startled to find it the Source of Confusion and every evil Work, the Parent of Misery.

IN these most opposite Cases, Pleasure still retains its Name, and we are too apt to be imposed upon by it; though it is pursued from a Purpose big with Mischief, and Ruin follows the Enjoyment of it.

FOR *Pleasure* is, in Fact, but *momentary Happiness*, as *Happiness* is *Pleasure perpetuated*. Pleasure, therefore, may not only be immediately succeeded by Pain, but be the direct Cause of it. And these two oppo-

site Things may mutually produce and run into one another. For Pain, endured in the Cause of Virtue, will certainly be rewarded with an Over-balance of Pleasure; and Pleasure, indulged in the Gratification of vicious Appetites, will draw after it the Bitterness of Pain.

TENDER, unexperienced Minds, such, especially, as, by the very Condition of their Birth, are most exposed to the Deceitfulness of Pleasure, and the Insinuations of Flattery, should be habituated to an early practical Conviction of this Truth: For it is a Truth, of which their own Experience may not perhaps convince them, till contrary Habits have disqualified them for relishing the purer Satisfaction of Virtue and Religion, and at the same Time rendered them averse to shake off their Fondness for the mortifying Disquietudes of Irreligion and Vice.

CONCERNING *Riches*, the Case is, if possible, still more evident: For, if they are lock'd up by the Miser, they contribute

no more to his real Happiness than the Ore, that lies buried in the Mine: And the Curses of those that are ready to perish fall upon the Head of him, who thus confines the Means of relieving of them. : But, if Riches are diffused by the Hand of Charity, they pour Blessings on the Owner, and make him *in Favour with God and Man*; For, when they *feed the Hungry and cloath the Naked, those that are ready to perish revive, the Fatherless are comforted, and the Widow's Heart leaps for Joy.* This Enjoyment of Riches must and does give to the charitable Mind that inexpressible Satisfaction, that *Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding*: And it will be certainly rewarded by the universal impartial Parent, who is, in sacred Writ, emphatically stiled a *Father of the Fatherless*, and introduced as *pleading the Cause of the Widow.*

TEMPORAL Power is in a still more striking Manner, through all the Measures and Gradations of it, and according to the opposite Exertions of it for good or bad

Purposes, the most efficacious Cause of Joy and Security, or of Dread and Distress; as well to the Person who is cloathed with it, as to those who respectively rejoice or groan under it: As it protects Millions in the Hands of a just and gracious King; or oppresses whole Nations, when it arms the Rage of a Tyrant.

SUBORDINATE Measures of Protection or Oppression result from every subordinate Possession, or Exercise of Power, thro' all the Ranks of Society, from the Throne to the Cottage: And, in all of them, Power maintains its State of Indifference to Good or Evil, to the Service or Disservice of every Individual, as every Individual gives a right or a wrong Direction to it.

WHEN a Man of great Fortune and Influence applies *both* as his own true Interest tells him they ought to be applied, we see his inward Complacency and Self-satisfaction in the Security and Affection of all who live around him: The Neighbourhood flourishes;

rishes; and every one is eager to express his Regard, and lend his grateful Assistance, to his known Friend and Benefactor, whenever he demands or wants it. If a Man of the same Fortune and Influence treats his Inferiors with a brutal Insolence, his Dependents are distressed, and lament their hard Lot; the Industry of the Tenant is suspended, because he hath no Prospect of reaping the Fruits of it; and all abhor the *iron Rod that rules them*.

CONSIDER the Case in a still narrower Compass;—A benevolent Master is the common Father of his Family, and, as such, is loved and respected by them. An insolent, over-bearing One is a petty Tyrant within the Walls of his own House. He hates and harrasses the little Circle of his Domestics. In Return, he is hated and despised by them, and rendered miserable from a Consciousness that he deserves their Contempt and Hatred.

BUT, admitting, that *sensual Pleasure, Riches, and Temporal Power*, had all that
inward

inward Worth, which the Votaries of them seem to imagine they have and suffer everlastingly from the fatal Delusion; *We* ought never to forget, what *they* seem never to remember, That these Objects are absolutely relative to the present State of Things, and have no Existence beyond them. Thus sensual Pleasure, though it may leave a lasting Contagion in the Mind, even when the Mind is out of the Body, most evidently can have no Existence as to us, when the Senses, which put us in a Capacity of being affected by it, are themselves destroyed.

WITH REGARD to *Riches* and *temporal Power*, the very Ideas we form of them arise from their being distributed among Men in various Degrees and Proportions. They are, indeed, by the Appointment of God, adjusted to the Scheme of Things in this World only: And it is for the wisest Reasons that God hath thus *made one Man to differ from another for a Season*; since these Differences create that
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Subordination which forms and preserves Society.

BUT we should reflect, that the original Equality of human Nature still subsists under all these external Distinctions; which, at the Hour of Death, *vanish as a Dream when one awaketh*. From that Moment the original Equality of Nature is restored; and no Distinction remains, but that which our own virtuous and right Conduct hath introduced; and that is a Distinction which will last for ever.

WITH this affecting View of Things before us, can we avoid seeing and adoring the Wisdom and Goodness of God, in the Provisions he hath made to conduct us with Safety, if we are not wanting to ourselves, through the Dangers of this changeable, treacherous World? Indeed, if we set before ourselves, in a just Light, the *Duties to be discharged* by us, the *Warnings afforded* us, the *real Pleasure* annexed to *right Conduct*, and the *Methods established* to wean us gradually from
too

too great a Fondness for worldly Enjoyments; we shall not fail to be touched with the most awakening Emotions of Piety and Gratitude towards the supreme Disposer of all Events, the sole Dispenser of true Happiness.

A N undue Fondness for the Things of this World is the dangerous Extreme against which Men should most carefully guard; because most Men carry that Fondness to such an Excess as disqualifies them for true Happiness. But the opposite Extreme of flying from the World, and deserting the Duties which Providence hath assigned us, (in order to engage our Thoughts upon innocent, improving Subjects, and exercise our Abilities so as to become useful to ourselves and others,) makes it necessary to expose a Delusion injurious to Religion, and hurtful to Mankind. For, to imagine that by this Means we shall reach more exalted Heights of Piety, is a Mistake incident only to the best-

best-disposed Minds, and, upon that Account, calls for our Animadversion.

HE *went about doing Good*, is the short Description of a perfect Character; for it is applied to the only Character amongst Men that ever reached Perfection. The same Divine Person, in like Manner as his Heavenly Father sendeth his *Rain on the Just and on the Unjust, conversed with Publicans and Sinners*, upon the most rational, benevolent Motive, because *He came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*: For, according to the familiar Instance made Use of by the Evangelist, *"they that are whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick."*

REAL Goodness is essentially active, and delights to communicate itself, as far as its Sphere reaches. Infinite Goodness, as it exists in the Deity, is for ever diffusing itself. *"The Father worketh hitherto, and I work,"* says our blessed Saviour. And how doth our heavenly Father work? with a continued Energy of Beneficence, *filling*

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all Things living with Plenteousness, and scattering Blessings throughout the whole Extent of the Creation. This, then, is the original Standard of Goodness; and human Goodness, however narrow its Sphere may be, is obliged to conform itself to the divine, and to improve and enlarge itself gradually by Acts of mutual Kindness. Without this Proof, Piety towards God wants the proper Test of its Reality; for he that behaves as not loving or regarding his Brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?

BUT false Standards of Christian Perfection were, by Degrees, set up, as the original Scheme of the Gospel became mixt and blended with human Inventions, and enthusiastic Refinements. Then a solitary, inactive Devotion was preferred to an active, social Display of Goodness. Hence too many, whose Intentions were directed to a good End, but formed upon false Principles, being less attentive than they ought to have been to that unerring Example
which

which our Saviour had set, and commanded all his Disciples to follow, caught an Infection so adapted to the natural Bent of their own Minds, and shut themselves up in Cloisters. Others, thinking it inconsistent with that exalted Purity which they laboured to attain, refused to take any Part in the Affairs or Concerns of a corrupt World. Hence they became useless Members of the Society which they might otherwise have enlightened by their Instruction, and mended by their Example.

BUT in all this, instead of *obeying the Will of God more perfectly*, they were manifestly contradicting the Designs of Providence. For every Man's Situation, if he attends to it, declares to him the Obligation he is under to fill it. Some, by their Birth or Talents, are called upon, as it were, by the Voice of Providence, to direct and preside over the great Affairs of the World. They are charged with the sacred Trust, and honoured with the glorious Privilege, of protecting the Innocent, coun-

tenancing the Virtuous, and spreading Prosperity through whole Nations; and every one, in his Sphere and Proportion, is obliged to do the same. For that King of Kings who formed us for Society, and, by a Variety of Gifts and Graces, fitted us for all the Classes and Departments of it, enjoins us to fill our respective Stations, and perform the Offices allotted to us in them, as visibly, as he hath framed and adapted the several Members of the Body to their peculiar Uses. And the Scripture, by a beautiful Propriety, points out our Duty to us, as Members of Society, by this very Allusion. So that we are no more at Liberty to fly from the Duties of our Station, whilst we continue in this World, than we can, without an Act of Disobedience to the Supreme Ruler of it, leave the World itself, till he summons us out of it.

THE regular Discharge of the Duties thus incumbent upon us will employ both our Thoughts and our Time as they ought to be employed; and the *Warnings afforded*

us by God are a perpetual Check upon us, to hinder us from deviating into the Paths that lead to Vice and Misery.

It might be natural to expect, that a Being of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, having, for Reasons suitable to those Perfections, placed such frail Creatures as we are in a State of Trial, for a very short Period of their Existence, and made the Happiness of the Whole depend upon their Behaviour in this State, would guard them as carefully, as the Nature of the Case admitted, against so fatal a Miscarriage. And he hath so guarded us. For he hath fixed Warnings, where none but the Author of our Nature could fix them, in the Mind itself. Hence every Transgression of Duty, 'till the Mind grows hardened, excites a corresponding Monition, and reminds us, that we are injuring ourselves. These Alarms, which never interrupt us in our reasonable Enjoyments, are most certainly intended, not to make our Life less pleasant, but our Happiness more secure.

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INDEED, these *religious Warnings* give us Uneasiness, and are for the *present* grievous to us, when we have neglected or violated our Duty, i. e. done ourselves some Mischief. But how should we have reconciled it with the Perfections of an all-wise Governor, if he had intended us, as he does now, for an endless State of Happiness or Misery, after a transitory Life, and suffer'd us to be plunged into it, without having communicated to us any previous Notice of his Intention?

To illustrate this by a familiar Instance;—Suppose a Traveller passing through a strange Country, the Inhabitants of which are no less insidious than agreeable; and that, whilst he is walking on in the midst of Perils, with full Security, he meets a faithful Friend, who, with the unfeigned Zeal of Friendship, points out the Snares with which he is encompassed, and the Destruction that hangs over him. Would our Traveller take it unkindly of his Friend, that he had alarmed him with Apprehensions from which he was before free,

free, and treat his honest Monitor in such a Manner, as if he had brought him into the Danger from which he meant to deliver him? Would he not rather embrace him with all the Warmth of Gratitude due to a Deliverer? Would he not double his Vigilance, and comfort himself with reflecting, that, being now fully apprized of his Danger, he may, by a suitable Caution, escape it, and return to his native Home in Safety?

BUT the *real Pleasure annexed to right Conduct* gives a double Force to the *Warnings against wrong*. Wisdom is Knowledge reduced to Practice; or it is that practical Knowledge which produces Virtue. Concerning *this* Wisdom, the wisest of the Children of Men, in a Passage which must strike every good Mind, though a thousand Times repeated, declares, "*Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour. Her Ways are Ways of Pleasurtness, and all her Paths are Peace.*" Here is no Limitation. The further we advance, the more we improve; and every additional Improvement

ment is an Accession of new Pleasure. Limitations, in the Nature of Things, are inseparably annexed to Vice, and restrain its Operations. And the Security of the World is, to a Degree, guarded by those Limitations. For Vice, carried to a certain Length of Mischief, is sunk in Misery, and ends in Self-destruction. But general Assertions, though founded in the clearest Truths, do not sufficiently convince such weak Minds as ours are. And, as every particular Virtue is an Instance in Point, I shall single out a few of the most affecting. Does *Patience* lose its Reward by having endured all Things? Does *Temperance* become injurious by those Abstinences that invigorate the Health of the Body, and strengthen the Powers of the Mind? Is *Justice* blameworthy, because it never ceases to redress the Injured? Hath *Fortitude* no Merit, when it is for ever exerted to assert the Cause of Truth and Virtue? Does *Benevolence* lose its Excellence by boundless Communications of itself, or does it run into an hurtful Excess by wishing to extend Happiness through the Universe?

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